

NSC BRIEFING

21 DECEMBER 1955

BRITISH MOVES IN MIDDLE EAST

I. British assuming more robust position in defense their widespread interests in Middle East.

A. Foreign Secretary Macmillan returned from Baghdad Pact meetings (1st Nov) apparently convinced that vigorous new moves were needed in area, both to bolster Iraq, and to counter Egyptian-Saudi influence.

B.

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Gen. Templer, (Chief, Imperial General Staff), together with head of Levant Dept, For Off, arrived Jordan 6 Dec,

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C.

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anti-Pact rioting broke out 15 Dec among Palestine refugees, spread over whole country within three days.

1. Propaganda broadcasts and faked news reports from other Arab states (Notably Egypt) fanned flames.

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2. Jordan's British-led Arab Legion was barely able to keep order: many casualties and arrests.

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1. Dissolution of parliament automatically dumped premier
Majali: caretaker cabinet under "elder statesman" Hashim
(close to royal family) will run gov't until elections.



III. ~~Second focus British activity is Saudi Arabia.~~



- A. One focus of dispute is oasis area claimed both by Saudis and
UK-backed local rulers. After three years of fruitless
negotiation, British announced that forces of Sultan Muscat
and Oman and also Shiek of Abu Dhabi had occupied Buraimi
on 26 Oct.

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B. Now, Sultan Muscat and Oman also receiving British support in moves against dissident feudatory, imam of Inner Oman.

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1. Sultan, whose control over imam in past was at best nominal, now anxious to bolster his authority in entire kingdom

2. Imam logical first target, since he--with Saudi support-- has made claim of independence.

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IV. Basic motivation for UK actions in Arabis is that British feel compelled to protect their Persian Gulf dependencies--and oil--

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V. Little chance either British or Saudis will moderate their stands.
A. In view overall UK fuel situation, British believe it essential keep control oil supplies.

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D. Saudis also fear "encirclement" by British, who influence Iraq, Jordan, and now trying to close off south.